

Art as a Master Narrative in Paul Auster's *City of Glass*

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Abstract—The present essay investigates the status of art as a master narrative in *City of Glass* (1985) by the contemporary American novelist Paul Auster. The study is mainly done on the basis of Lyotard's philosophical ideology that defines postmodernism as "incredulity towards meta-narratives". He defines master narrative as a totalizing framework that plays the role of authorizing and legitimizing human knowledge and experience. He asserts that in the absence of meta-narratives of the past, the postmodern world is ruled by mini-narratives or little narratives that create a world of indeterminacy, meaninglessness, and disclosure. Due to the lack of transcendental ideologies of the past, all accepted ideas of the western civilization such as reality, human knowledge, and identity are called into question. Accordingly, the idea of art as a master narrative and as a source of absolute truth is taken into consideration in the current essay. The study is done on the basis of the role of literature and architecture as two significant branches of art in the context of *City of Glass* as a true representation of postmodern individual with all his worries, beliefs and disbeliefs, his fragmented self, and multiplicity of his philosophical, social, political concerns. Accordingly, the current essay traces the root of fragmentation, pluralism, and loss of contemporary subject to the loss of metaphysical certainties in the contemporary world.

Index Terms—postmodernism, art, master narrative, little narrative

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last century, there have happened so many changes, transformations, and developments in all aspects of life. The contemporary era is considered as a period of social, political, economic, and moral catastrophe. As a result of these transformations, so many debates have come into existence among the philosophical and theoretical figures of the world and the heritage of Enlightenment and foundations of western thought and philosophy are called into question. Accordingly, there is much confusion in the contemporary theoretical and philosophical ideologies that did not exist in the past, and any theorist lays his theoretical views and perspectives on his own distinct foundations, rather than the traditional master narratives that were the common universal foundation of all thoughts, theories, and philosophical perspectives.

To take the overall condition of contemporary era into consideration as a whole, it is an effort to break down the traditional conventions and norms. Most of the features of postmodernism are rooted in rejection of authorities and centers, either metaphysical or political. So, the postmodern world is against hierarchy and traditional aesthetic values.

John Francois Lyotard is one of the most significant philosophical and theoretical figures of contemporary postmodern way of thinking. The significance of his theories for the development of the present essay lies in the fact that he considers himself as a philosopher and takes postmodernism into account mainly from the perspective of the crisis in metaphysical philosophy. He mainly deals with the philosophical meta-narratives or grand-narratives and their status in the contemporary era in comparison to the modern age of reason.

Fredric Jameson in his introduction to Lyotard's "Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge", asserts that just as Habermas considers the postmodern period as "crisis of legitimation", Lyotard's main concern is also legitimation and its foundational status being shattered in contemporary era. Also, M.A.R. Habib in *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory* sees the postmodern condition as lack of "totalizing schemes of explanation, and the dissolution of human subjectivity" (M.A.R. Habib. 2005, p.566).

Lyotard points out that the collapse of traditional forms of legitimation which he calls master-narratives, leads to the advent of new forms of scientific legitimation. He takes two major master-narratives of traditional era into account, which are "the liberation of humanity" and "speculative unity of all knowledge." In his opinion, the justification of scientific work is not to produce a model of an outside reality, but to produce new ideas and new statements

Lyotard is mainly concerned with the nature of knowledge in an era that is totally different from traditional society. This era is characterized with computer technology, which has changed the whole world into a global village. According to him, the crisis of legitimation in this society of fragmentation, doubt, and uncertainty is of great significance. He puts his ideology in the framework of Wittgenstein's concept of language games that are defined as diverse types of utterance. The significant issue regarding language games is that they are not defined and legitimized in terms of some external absolute truth, but rather on the basis of their own internal rules. In the same way, postmodern knowledge is legitimized on the basis of little narratives rather than the master narratives of the past.

He argues that resorting to totalizing concepts for authority in contemporary condition is not reasonable. The traditional master narratives are not capable of legitimizing the changing condition of postmodern era. So, the contemporary world is a world of delegitimation and nihilism. Accordingly, since the foundations of traditional thought are shaken and searching for a transcendental authority is no longer credible, postmodern science and knowledge are not supposed to reach an agreement, but to find instabilities.

He asserts that all kinds of interaction can be organized as games having their own specific moves and rules. He describes these language games as following the rules established by their specific players. Since the rules are local, the rules of one game cannot be applied to other games. Then he turns to knowledge and characterizes both narrative and scientific knowledge as consisting of moves that are required to be legitimized. Narrative knowledge representative of pre-modern societies is legitimized in the process of being narrated and applied by people in their daily lives. Scientific knowledge on the other hand, is required to be legitimized through resorting to universal sources of truth or the grand narratives. These grand narratives are defined as overarching ideologies or systems of thought that encompass the whole body of knowledge and scientific knowledge.

In the 20th century however, science is delegitimized, since the traditional grand narratives through which science was legitimized are rejected. So, in the contemporary era, there is no consensus, and we must accept a multitude of language games. Therefore, absolute truth is replaced with local truth that is the main metaphysical view called into question in the contemporary era. Accordingly, the postmodern period is characterized as a mixture of different opposing perspectives, each acceptable in its own right.

II. DISCUSSION

Meta-narrative, also known as master-narrative or grand narrative is the key concept in Lyotard's theory of the postmodern condition. It is defined as an abstract idea that is so comprehensive that can be considered as an explanation to the historical experience and knowledge. Etymologically, meta means about and narrative means story. So, meta-narrative means a story about story. John Stephan defines it as "a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience."

To clarify the term, giving some examples of meta-narrative is helpful. The enlightenment thinkers for example, believed that human beings are capable of achieving moral and social development through reason and rational thinking. Christians also believe that human nature has the capability of redemption and eternal life. Muslims on the other hand, believe that ultimate victory is for those who purify their heart and soul, and those who accept the divine nature of the world and the invitation of prophets would inherit the Earth. So, all meta-narratives cope with some kind of transcendental and spiritual truth, and imply a philosophy of history based on which knowledge and experience in general are explained.

The objective of this essay is to consider the status of art as a master narrative in the contemporary world, especially the fields of literature and architecture as two significant branches of art. There has always been a close relationship between art and other aspects of human life such as religion, politics, culture, science, and so on, all of which together created human civilization. Each period's art reflects the dominant ideology of that period and, at the same time is itself rooted in that ideology. Traditional idea of art's capacity to generate meaning and to provide a framework for signification and truth is refused in contemporary era. Contemporary literature especially metaphysical detective genre to which *City of Glass* belongs is filled with ideologies and formal characteristics specific to postmodern era.

City of Glass is the first book in *The New York Trilogy*. It is the story of Daniel Quinn, the protagonist who writes his own story in a red notebook. His wife and his son are dead and he wants to relieve himself through writing. From the very beginning, the story is founded on the basis of chance and misunderstanding. On a succession of evenings, late at night, Quinn receives a call. The caller wants to talk to a private detective called Paul Auster. At the beginning, he tries to tell the caller that he has the wrong number but the voice is too determined to accept any answer. At last, he agrees to meet his caller, whose name is Peter Stillman. Quinn assumes the identity of Paul Auster, and Peter Stillman wants Quinn to protect him from his insane father, whom Quinn should find for him. Then after a series of ups and downs, the protagonist's investigation ends with no closure.

Postmodern ideology calls into question the classical distinction between high and low culture. In the past, art was considered as a context for diverse opposing values and points of view fighting for dominance. The reader could draw moral, social, cultural, political, and religious values out of works of art, especially works of literature. For instance, the continuous conflict between good and bad in classical literature always led to the victory of good. Interpretation was considered as a way of grasping the meaning hidden in a work of art. Thus, the work of art was supposed to contain meaning and be useful for the society. In fact, this kind of art is characterized as a device for glorifying man as the most

significant creature of the world through representation of his ideas. So, the field of art was so significant in the past and was considered as a master narrative that contained meaning.

However, with the advent of postmodern era, art was taken into account as representation of the chaotic and fragmented reality of the contemporary world. All traditional methods and techniques are replaced with innovation and fragmentation to liberate man from the limitations and constraints of traditional art. The contemporary postmodern condition is reflected in all kinds of art like painting, sculpture, dance, music, poetry, and literature that are filled with images of uncertainty, deconstruction, dehumanization, and fragmentation.

To take it into account on the basis of Lyotard's theory of legitimation, although the postmodern art is liberated from the grand narratives and no trace of universal truth can be found in it, it is under the authority of little narratives. For example, chance and contingency are among these little narratives. In other words, the criteria of judging the legitimacy of a work of art have changed in the current era and a piece of art is no longer judged on the basis of its moral, social or religious values.

Two significant characteristics of postmodern literature that are in contrast with the idea of art as a master narrative are pastiche and intertextuality. Jameson argues that today's literature is characterized with pastiche that is a celebration of heterogeneity and fragmentation. Intertextuality that is found to a large extent in Auster's work refers to a reliance on other works of literature either by the author himself or by other writers, contemporary or classical. These techniques that are commonplace in Auster's works are representative of postmodernist incredulity towards master narratives.

This ideology is evident in the formal structure of Paul Auster's works. The structure of *City of Glass* is highly fragmented. There is no linear development of the narrative but rather, it seems that the narrative is moving in a circular pattern that will never stop. There are so many levels of reality and fiction the protagonist goes through in search of meaning and reality. He goes from one story to another, from one role to another, from one identity to another, and finally ends in nothingness and disclosure. So, the postmodern world of this novel contains no meaning and Quinn's search for meaning is doomed to failure. Accordingly, contemporary art is not capable of constructing people's identities for it does not contain any values or master narratives. So, it is impossible to understand the world through literature.

Umberto Eco (1994) argues that in postmodern fiction, the fictional world in which the characters inhabit is a rhizomatic world. He describes this realm as "so structured that every path can be connected with every other one." So, there is "no exit into full meaning or certitude." This rhizomatic pattern is evident in *City of Glass*. Quinn goes through different roles and identities throughout the story, from Daniel Quinn as a writer to William Wilson and then to Max Work and from Max work to Paul Auster, and in the end to Quinn as fictional character with no real identity. The search for meaning is also limited to the city with its fragmented internal and external structure. Accordingly, the world of fiction is filled with uncertainty, fragmentation, and skepticism, and does not contain any absolute reality or meaning. So, it can no longer be considered as a master narrative or even containing a master narrative.

Metafiction is one of the main features of postmodern literature in general, and Paul Auster's works in particular. Metaphysical detective genre as a representative of Lyotard's idea of postmodern philosophy and ideology applies this technique to a large extent. It is defined as a technique in fictional writing that draws attention to the process of writing fiction. The reader is constantly reminded that he is reading a work of fiction that is not real. This technique is rooted in the contemporary questioning of reality and truth. Accordingly, Patricia Waugh in her *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious fiction* (1984), defines the term as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Patricia Waugh, 1984, p.2).

In a work of metafiction, the reader cannot understand reality and everything changes into fiction. The narrator often intrudes the narration to remind the reader of being in a fictional world, either addressing him or her directly or indirectly. In these works, the status of author as an authoritative figure is shaken and the reader is to grasp the meaning of the text. The rules and conventions are destroyed leading reality to become a suspect concept that cannot be understood.

In a work of art, the narrative is a framework through which the reader enters the fictional work, or looks at the fictional world as distinct from the real world. So, the fictional world of the characters is separated from the real world of the reader. However, metafiction calls this framework into question usually through references to the acts of reading and writing that are prevalent in Paul Auster's works. In such cases, the author intrudes into the narration and destroys the framework that separated the author and narrator. For example, in *City of Glass* the narrator receives a call from a man seeking a detective called Paul Auster from the "Auster Detective Agency." So, to take it into account from the perspective of McHale's theory of ontological postmodern fiction, this is the point at which "different worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated." He characterizes the dominant of postmodernism as:

Postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like ... 'Which world is this? What to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?' other typical postmodern questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world it projects, for instance: What is a world? What kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated? What is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects? How is a projected world structured? And so on. (qtd. in Nicole 33)

This definition could be used when taking kinds of detective fiction into consideration. Accordingly, while reading a metaphysical detective, a series of ontological questions comes to the reader's mind that leads him to uncertainty about the nature of crime. This can be related to Lyotard's ideology that deals basically with such ontological questions about the postmodern society and postmodern subjects.

David Harvey (1990) in his *The Condition of Postmodernity*, asserts that metaphysical detective fiction is characterized with "fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or totalizing discourses" that are "the hallmark of postmodern thought." To use Lyotard's terminology, this is the overall condition of incredulity towards meta-narratives in the postmodern era. Accordingly, the existence of absolute meaning is rejected.

In contrast to the well-constructed world of traditional detective, postmodern detective is loosely constructed. There are so many clues leading to still more clues that lead astray the detective. There is little opportunity for the detective as well as the reader to find the solution and resolve the mystery. The story is filled with opposing clues and evidence that do not absolutely negate each other. So, the reader remains in an uncertain situation, not knowing what to do. John G. Cowelti in his 2012 essay "Some Notes on the Structure of *The confidence Man*" describes this situation as:

Something is presented, a character, an incident, an idea, anything which might give the reader some clue to the interpretation of the represented reality; then a counter incident or idea appears, powerful enough to destroy the usefulness of the first clue, but insufficient to provide a foundation for a new interpretation of what has been presented. We are left in the air with no way of resolving two mutually exclusive possibilities (qtd. In Bursikova).

Accordingly, the fictional world of the postmodern detective is characterized as a labyrinth that is defined as a construction that is essentially ambiguous. From the point of view of the outside viewers it is so well constructed and amazing, but from the point of view of those stuck in it, it is representative of a chaotic world devoid of any meaning or sense. To take it into account from the perspective of confusion, it characterizes the fictional world of metaphysical detective. The detective is filled with confusion and bewilderment in a chaotic world of clues and evidence. The detective is lost in the labyrinth of the fictional world and is not capable of solving the mystery and attaining closure.

On the basis of the definition given by Merivale and Sweeny, metaphysical detective shatters the assumption that human mind, given enough time and evidence can solve a mystery and attain a reasonable conclusion or closure. For instance, in *City of Glass*, Quinn's ideology is depicted as:

He had always imagined that the key to good detective work was a close observation of details. The more accurate the scrutiny, the more successful the results. The implication was that human behavior could be understood, that beneath the infinite façade of gestures, tics and silences there was finally a coherence, an order a source of motivation. But after struggling to take in all these surface effects, Quinn felt no closer to Stillman than when he first started following him. He had lived Stillman's life, walked at his pace, seen what he had seen, and the only thing he felt now was the man's impenetrability. (Paul Auster, p.65)

So, in the metaphysical detective, the narrator moves from the traditional role of a viewer to the postmodern role of entering the labyrinth of the narrative in search of truth and meaning. He is walking in a chaotic labyrinthine city, searching for a solution. Everything changes so rapidly in this postmodern city. But in the end, he understands that there is no such thing as a center or a solution to the mystery, and his efforts are in vain. In many cases the exhausted detective leaves the mystery unresolved. Thus, the story remains open-ended and it is up to the reader to draw a conclusion.

Postmodern texts are characterized with two kinds of reading. The first one is paranoid reading and the second one conjecture reading. According to Bran Nicole, paranoid reading came into existence on the basis of the notion of postmodernism as the age of suspicion and is rooted in the ideology of critics such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud who claim that the literal meaning of a text conceals the connotative meanings that lie beneath the denotative signification of the text. They take interpretation into account as the process of revealing the hidden meanings. Thus, the reader is expected to analyze a series of diverse patterns and images represented in the work, find relations between them and grasp the meaning of the text.

The second technique of reading, conjecture, is closer to the postmodern detective and its open-endedness. Umberto Eco in his *Reflections on the Name of the Rose* characterizes this technique as making a hypothesis on the basis of the events of the narrative that the events have a logical meaning that can be grasped. He then draws a comparison between conjecture and the concept of labyrinth and specifies two kinds of labyrinth: the classical maze and the postmodern mannerist maze. According to him, the classical maze is linear; it goes from the entrance to the center and then to the exit. Mannerist maze on the other hand, is "a kind of tree, a structure with roots, with many blind alleys. There is only one exit, but you can get it wrong" (Umberto Eco, 1994, p.57).

In *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Fiction*, Bran Nicole uses the Metaphor of rhizome to clarify the issue:

The metaphor of the rhizome (a botanical term for a kind of plant stem) is used by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980) to enable us to picture the relation of things to other things in philosophy, language, the arts, and social sciences- according to principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and rupture-in a way that provides an alternative to a straightforward linear of interpretation which is central to paranoid reading. Unlike the roots of a tree 'which plots a point, fixes an order', the value of the rhizome is that 'any point ... can be connected to any other, and must be' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 7) (Bran Nicole, p. 67)

On the basis of this ideology, metaphysical detective can be compared to a maze in which the postmodern metropolis is represented in contrast to the locked room of the classical detective. Thus, the detective has to cope with a wide domain of clues that like the branches of a rhizome lead to more and more clues. Since there is no structuring principle, everything has the potential to carry a meaning. So, the postmodern detective is not expected to have a clear ending at which all questions are answered. In the end, the mystery is not resolved, and the story is left open-ended. As a whole, the detective can find no way out of the maze and if he attains closure, it won't reveal any absolute truth.

The story of Tower of Babel can also be considered as a challenge to the idea of art as a master narrative. This story is represented in Henry Dark's *The New Babel* that is put within Stillman's book. Stillman asserts that *The New Babel* is "the most visionary account of the new continent that had been written up to that time" (Paul Auster, p.46). The Tower of Babel is characterized as a place of order, unity, and language of heaven, and also as a symbol of Nimrod's universal power. He points out that when constructing the tower, all people were striving to attain the communal objective that was unity and harmony:

The building of the Tower became the obsessive, overriding passion of mankind, more important finally than life itself. Bricks became more precious than people. Women laborers did not even stop to give birth to their children; they secured the newborn in their aprons and went right on working. Apparently, there were three different groups involved in the construction: those who wanted to dwell in heaven, those who wanted to wage war against God, and those who wanted to worship idols. At the same time, they were united in their efforts—"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." (Paul Auster, p.44)

Stillman draws a parallel between the story of Babel and America as a new Babel. In his opinion, the overall idea of the book is construction of paradise in America. Henry Dark argues that paradise is not a place to be discovered but it is inherent within human beings: "Rather, its existence was imminent within man himself: the idea of a beyond he might someday create in the here and now" (Paul Auster, p.47). Accordingly, man is capable of constructing the paradise mainly through recreation of the language of heaven: "Therefore, Dark contended, it would indeed be possible for man to speak the original language of innocence and to recover, whole and unbroken, the truth within himself" (Paul Auster, p. 47).

Then, he argues that according to *The Bible*, the movement of human life and civilization has always been westward, and concludes that America is the utopian new Babel of unity and meaning in which the language of heaven would be restored:

For the city of Babel—or Babylon—was situated in Mesopotamia, far East of the land of the Hebrews. If Babel lay to the west of anything, it was Eden, the original site of mankind. Man's duty to scatter himself across the whole earth—in response to God's command to "be fertile . . . and fill the earth"—would inevitably move along a western course. And what more western land in all Christendom, Dark asked, than America? (Paul Auster, p.48)

So, he asserts that it's time for a change in the history of man, and predicts that the new Babel would be constructed in 1960:

... its very shape aspiring toward the heavens, a symbol of the resurrection of the human spirit. History would be written in reverse. What had fallen would be raised up; what had been broken would be made whole. Once completed, the Tower would be large enough to hold every inhabitant of the New World. There would be a room for each person, and once he entered that room, he would forget everything he knew. After forty days and forty nights, he would emerge a new man, speaking God's language, prepared to inhabit the second, everlasting paradise. (Paul Auster, p.48-9)

Ironically, the date predicted for construction of paradise of unity and meaning corresponds with the peak of postmodernism. So, not only America is not unified, but also it is going more and more into the depths of heterogeneity and meaninglessness. Instead of creating a huge tower with enough space for the whole population of the new world, the contemporary architecture constructs small apartments that are like separated cells. The society represented in *City of Glass* with its diverse ideologies and ways of living as mentioned earlier is in sharp contrast with the idea of America as a place of metaphysical and social unity.

In fact, *The City of Glass* is a representation of the overall condition of postmodern era as characterized by Lyotard. His metaphysical ideology of rejection of master narratives that has brought about so many changes in all aspects of contemporary life is evident within the story. Little narratives such as chance and capital that have replaced the classical master narratives have created so much uncertainty, ambiguity, and fragmentation. These features are evident within the internal realm of the characters as well as the external realm of the city. Stillman refers to both these realms when talking to Quinn:

I have come to New York because it is the most forlorn of places, the most abject. The brokenness is everywhere, the disarray is universal. You have only to open your eyes to see it. The broken people, the broken things, the broken thoughts. The whole city is a junk heap. It suits my purpose admirably. I find the streets an endless source of material, an inexhaustible storehouse of shattered things. (Paul Auster, p.77)

Accordingly, the postmodern literary works are devoid of any dominant meaning capable of encompassing the whole body of the work. So, it is the reader's task to get a meaning out of the text according to his own understanding and interpretation. Since the contemporary world is devoid of meta-narratives and ruled on the basis of language games, the text is characterized as a labyrinth with so many diverse directions, and it is not clear whether or not the reader arrives at a meaning.

III. CONCLUSION

Lyotard as one of the most significant philosophers of the contemporary era defines postmodernism as incredulity toward master narratives. In this way, he takes into account the condition of knowledge in contemporary developed societies. He defines a master narrative as a universal totalizing framework that orders and explains human knowledge and experience. He asserts that these frameworks had an authoritative role in the past and everything was authorized and legitimized on the basis of these universal rules. He then argues that these principles and frameworks are not credible within the context of postmodernism in which no genre of concepts or points of view is privileged over the others.

In his opinion, the postmodern era is characterized with continuous change and increasing development due to the rising development of science and scientific knowledge, especially in the field of computer and technology. So, the rules governing the world have also changed. With the master narratives being replaced with micro-narratives or little narratives, the rules of legitimation are totally transformed. Little narratives are defined as incompatible desires, points of view, and ways of thinking specific to each person in the current era. Accordingly, believing in the little narratives creates a world of fragmentation and disagreement.

This theoretical and metaphysical condition has strongly influenced all aspects of postmodern life, especially in developed societies like America that is the setting of *City of Glass*. With authority and legitimation losing their central status, postmodernism is considered as an age of social and cultural heterogeneity and plurality. Fundamental changes in different aspects of life have created an age described with different names such as the age of consumerism, late capitalism, and the virtual and digital age. The transformations and developments that happened in the second half of the twentieth century reached their peak in the 1980s and the world changed into a world of plurality and fragmentation.

Thus, all social, cultural, and regional boundaries were crossed and the difference between high and low culture, high and low social classes as well as the differences in other aspects of life were no longer acceptable. With the development of technology and the appearance of virtual space and global village, the geographical boundaries were also crossed. So, the social, political, historical, cultural, and moral conditions became more and more unstable and decentered. These transformations were inevitably reflected in the field of arts in the field of arts in general and literature in particular.

Paul Auster's works are strongly influenced by the postmodernist literary tradition. His *New York Trilogy* belongs to the genre of metaphysical detective fiction that is a true postmodern genre. This genre is a true representative of postmodern condition as characterized by Lyotard. It belongs to the age of incredulity. While the classical detective belonged to the age of reason, meaning, and closure, the postmodern detective is filled with the feeling of loss, lack of meaning, and disclosure in a world described as a rhizomatic maze.

Art is taken into account as a significant master narrative in this essay. Literature as a branch of art cannot be considered as a legitimizing power for it is characterized with pastiche and intertextuality that represent the fragmented nature of postmodern world. On the other hand, architecture that was supposed to construct the new Tower of Babel as a place of unity and meaning has constructed skyscrapers with distinct cells for each postmodern subject as well as labyrinthine streets in which the contemporary subject gets lost. So, the overall condition is the condition of disagreement and fragmentation.

As a whole, *City of Glass* is a true representation of postmodern world with all its fragmentation and plurality. *New York City* is depicted as the epitome of social, cultural, and metaphysical condition of contemporary era. The postmodern city is a threatening place that creates the feeling of skepticism and uncertainty in citizens. So, the contemporary subject prefers his own internal arena.

Accordingly, since the problem of postmodern man is inherent in the nature of postmodernism itself, it seems that there is no solution to this condition. Postmodernism and the problems of identity and reality are interrelated. So, in order to save the postmodern man, it is required to undo the postmodernist movement and go back to the traditional master narratives. Postmodern man must resort to a center, to a point of reference in order to grasp meaning out of his life and to understand the nature of his identity. Although this solution seems impossible, it seems that there is no other option.

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